Report
on the History
Of Missions
In the
South Sea Islands

The islands usually denominated the "Islands of the South seas" are situated between the 5 Deg. S. L. & 25th Deg. South Lat. They are very numerous and extremely fertile producing with little cultivation all the luxuries peculiar to this genial climate; but generally inhabited by a race of men degraded to the lowest degree in paganism & superstition. It is the history of the rise and progress of the christian religion in a few of these Islands which is the subject assigned me as a report. It may truely be said of some of the South sea Islands that the Sun of righteousness has arisen upon them with peculiar lustre. and that after a long & dreary winter the storms are over & gone & the

and all the exhilerating beauties of spring are ushered in, But who we take a view of the moral state of the inhabitants of those islands now called christian islands and attend to the mysterious dispensations of Providence towards the Missionaries our minds follow those dear servants of Jesus with sympathy in their long series of sufferings & trials.

Twenty years since these Islands were inhabited by human beings the most degraded of all men, But we cannot stop to notice any of the particular facts recorded in the history of those islands previous to their embracing Christianity. It is true that the moral state of the inhabitants was represented to the Church Missionary Society of London as peculiarly favorable to the introduction of genuine religion, but we shall shew that this was by no means according to truth. The memorable era which commemorates the first visitation of the "heralds of salvation" to some of these islands was in the year 1797. The Missionaries for 15 years toiled & prayed, they went forth from time to time as opportunity offered bearing the precious seed. They sowed in tears and by faith looked to him who alone "giveth the increase" Every day served to shew the total depravity of the human heart & the self ruined state of men, as well as the humbling fact that it is grace which, by the distinguishing attention of man from man

And that men who are in a supposed state of security have need to take heed lest they fall & draw down upon themselves ruin and injure the cause of the blessed Redeemer.

It was not until after the the ship which conveyed the missionaries had left the south Seas to return to England that the true character of the natives. Many of them whom they were first made acquainted with the object of the missionaries were apparently much pleased with their benevolent design and seemed to acquiesce with the plan for ameliorating their condition. But it was not long after the Duff (the name of the ship) had gone before the savage mind made it appearance in the conduct of the natives towards their late visitants. Harmlessness was only a characteristic of these people seemingly and that only for a short time. For it was not long before there was a plot laid for robing them of their property, however this plot design being discovered the brethren passed for sometime without any serious molestation though not without feeling themselves under the necessity of being on the watch and of committing themselves to the "Shephard of Israel" for protection indeed they knew not but that the fickle dispositions of the natives, who knew no law, but that of appetite & passion might lead them to perpetrate some of the most cruel & inhuman acts towards them.

The supposed success of the first missionaries induced the Society to select & send forth more labourers into these fields which it was thought were whitening for the harvest but accordingly in 1798 they embarked but the ship was captured by a French cruiser and after a variety of painful & successive trials these poor dejected missionaries all returned to England except and arrived about one year from the time that they set-

The little band whose lot was cast for many a trial amongst the barbarians generally acted consistently & prudently but amongst their severest trials were the defections of
They were frequently compelled to view acts of the most shocking inhumanity. The worship of the natives was a mixture of superstitious idolatry & witch craft. The regulation of which depends on their priests, who did not demand that human bodies should be offered as expiatory sacrifices Such bodies as were devoted to sacrifice were often being mangled in the most cruel manner & thrown into a pit which it was thought accumulated to hundreds of the remnants of victims which fell at the shrine of Idolatry. Infanticide prevailed to an alarming extent and what was shocking to all feeling was a Society formed with the express purpose of extinguishing the life of their infants as soon as they came into the world. The King and Queen were members of this society. During the 30 years of Pomare's reign it is supposed that 2000 human beings were offered on the alter of Paganism. But the greatest cause of the rapid depopulation of some of these islands was the unbounded licentiousness of morals A licentiousness the extent of which was greatly enlarged by the visits of Europeans: for depraved as the natives were of themselves this depravity was aggravated tenfold by the intercourse of foreign seamen. The tendency towards entire extermination was fearfully unparalleled. Capt. Cook in 1774 had made the estimate of their numbers to be at 204,000 but this may have been an overrating of them for when the missionaries arrived

A.D. 1796 Otaheite did not as was thought number more than 16,000 yet in 8 years we find the decrease to be one half. But this increase since ~~abjuring~~ the triumph of the Christian religion been so great that ~~it~~ it is supposed that there were present on one meeting 6000 persons. It was amongst such a people that the self denied missionary had to publish the news of salvation whilst deep rooted idolitry of the most degrading kind rendered it impossible, in the character or condition by mere human agency. But faith the substance of things not seen looked forward to the the fulfilment of the blessed promise "The isles shall wait for his law" During these ~~long~~ long years of trial and of the power of the prince of darkness what was above all other things the most heart rending to the missionaries was the defection of three of this number one of whom was gradually decoyed from the ways of piety, by familiar intercourse with the heathen, and sunk into the arms of an idolitress. It is believed that he was murdered about a year after his apostacy, by the natives. The second about six months afterwards, embraced infidelity. He Mr Bloomhall had been a minister of the gospel. Having for some time cherished his infidel notions though not without some secret goadings of conscience, he went to sea and after some awful dispensations of a frowning Providence, he was brought to repentance, and in India again professed a hope in Jesus. The third (Mr Atkinson) gradually swerved from christian duties and ~~has~~ connected himself with the heathen, returned his Bible to his former companions and, like the two before mentioned connected himself with a heathen woman. What must have been the emotions of the brethren when within so short a space of time it

became their duty to excommunicate those with whom they had often taken sweet counsel.' *

It had fallen to the lot of the missionaries to have different islands assigned to them, as the scenes of their perils,—their sore trials,—their faith, & their prayers. In a state where the irregular passions & appetites of savages, fired with wild ambition always sought to rule, it could not but be expected that at the instigation of a base conspirator these fair islands might be deluged in blood. In one eruption of this kind of savage vengence even extended to the harmless missionaries, who from pious principles thinking it not fit to be amongst the contending parties, withdrew to a retired spot amongst the rocks. But nevertheless in the fury of the heathen victors, after the battle when quietly returning to their habitations three of them were slain, and the rest escaped through the interference of a friendly chief. This apparently severe dispensation of Providence, seemed to bid the missionaries whose lives were spared, to quit this place the first opportunity, until they should see some glimmerings of the sun of righteousness dawning upon these places filled with the habitations of horid cruelty. The civil convulsions having abated, they ceased not to toil & sow the good seed for five succeeding years, and in the meantime the acquisition of increased knowledge of the native tongue, had a large share of their attention. More than 2,000 words had been collected into a vocabulary; as also an essay towards the compilation of an Otahitian Grammar. Tempted misprints did not cease to be attached to these modern apostles

* Note. The three mentioned apostates were not all of the same island. Mr Pearson was situated in Tongatabboo one of the Society Islands. The three were of Raiatea.

They were often in want of the necessaries of life, & their poverty & wretchedness only excited the contempt of the natives, who judged that if they had been the favourites of their own King he would not have them to deprivation of all things. Occasionally indeed some clothing was sent them from England, but for the during the period of six years nothing had arrived from London, & from discouragement left them & went to Port Jackson. In 1807 Mr Jefferson died in the hope of a joyful resurrection. He possessed superior qualifications for a missionary. It was in this year (1807) that Pomare who for some time before had serious impressions, forwarded a handsome specimen of his improvement to the Miss. Soc. in a letter written with his own hand. In 1808 a rebellious sedition broke out, which induced the Missionaries to fly the island, together with the King, excepting four single brethren. These excepting one soon followed, & all but two soon after sailed for N.S. Wales. Peace again being established, Pomare earnestly solicited the return of the Missionaries. In 1811 four complied & returned: but proceeded no further than Eimio, where they established schools. Now the time of visitation drew nigh. Pomare, under conviction of sin applied for baptism, declaring his faith in Christianity, & his determination to worship the true God. But this for good reasons was for the present declined. He as an humble convert continued steadfast amidst harassing persecutions & strong temptations on the part of the heathen. Some natives of Eimeo, whose convictions had been long stifled were brought under the convicting operations of the Spirit. At the same time something similar

was going on in Tahiti. In Eimio seriousness continued & more became awakened. At a meeting called by the missionaries about ~~forty~~ Forty agreed to renounce Idolatry, and from time to time there were additions to their number. Two or three Chiefs amongst them. Moreover those who had rejected idols continued firm in their purpose, & regularly attended the means of grace. A mission of 2 was sent round the island (Eimio) to preach and it was found on this excursion that Idols were every where falling into disrepute, & were called Foolish Spirits & Wicked Spirits. but Jehovah was termed The good Spirit. At the Island Hauhine, one Chief cast away his gods & observed the sabath, & requested teachers to be sent him: they request however it was not under existing circumstances possible to be complied with. The year 1815 commenced with a pleasing increase of attention. About 300 attended the ordinances 260 were in the schools a considerable number in neibouring Islands forsook idols, In all not less than 500 who acknowledged the true God. This rejection of idols inflamed the heathen who laid a scheme for their total destruction, whilst the good natives were engaged in divine worship, they did succeed so far as to burn the house of worship and in driving them from the island.

Soon after an influential priest abandoned idolatry, & his examples had a general influence, for destruction became the fate of not only ~~the~~ idols but the altars & Moreas also were torn to pieces &

the wood of which the were composed, used for the common purposes of dreping victuels &c
The idolitors could not see such conduct without painful emotions: accordingly they fixed ~~at~~ a time to make a sudden attack: but their design was discovered & the christians who ~~at~~ on the very night on which they were to be massacred took a vessel & fled to Eimio. So exasperated were their enimies at this that they wreaked their vengiance on one another. This commotion sensibly felt in both Tahiete and Eimio. it was with difficulty, Peace, & quiet possesion of property could be again attained. At another time the idolitors made an attack on the worshipers of God whilst they were engaged in divine service. But they were thrown into confusion. yet so humanely treated by Pomare that they saw the influence of christian principles & ever after became obedient subjects to the King
This also resulted in the utter renunciation of paolitry and in the reinstating of Pomare in the government of Tahiete & its dependencies. The horrid accompaniments of heathen worship from this time ceased and never as sincerly began to call on the true Jehovah. Nor was this glorious triumph confined to a few islands its salutary influence was felt in some of the Leward Islands. The new converts caught the Missionary Spirit and hastened to tell the glad tidings to their fellow islanders. Pomare continued the zealous advocate & promoter Christianity. In 1816 the Missionaries speak thus "The mission has been strengthened by the addition of sixteen Missionaries. — In Eimio alone 1200 have embraced Christianity & nearly 600

the Society Islands.—The supposed number in all the islands not less than seven thousand.—84 houses for worship erected & the sabbath observed every where with strictness.—about 400 copies of the Old Testament history and 400 of the New Testament.—1000 copies of a catechism made for their use which many children could repeat perfectly.—& about 5000 able to read.—Though none were as yet admitted to sealing ordinances, yet many gave evidence of being real converts. Secret prayer was generally practiced, "Make haste say they & learn our language that you may teach us."

In May 1818 a general meeting was holden in Eimeo, in imatation of the Missionary society held at London. on which occasion about 2000 of the natives attended, and formed a society to be called "the Tahaitian Missionary Society" the object of which should be to aid the parent Society in sending the gospel to other nations. After a sermon by one of the Missionaries. King Pomare afterwards gave a spirited and affecting address on the propriety of the measure they were on that occasion adopting, which had its proper effect on the minds of his subjects. A large society was formed with the King as its President.

The progress of the gospel has been since more extensive throughout the numerous islands of the South Pacific.

In 1821. a deputation was sent from London to that highly favoured Islands on a visit to the various Missionary

stations. Where at Eimio the express [illegible]

to the London Missionary Society, "Truely the h[illegible]

"us. God has indeed done great things here in a [illegible]

"& religious view — A nation of pilferers have become

"by trustworthy — A people formerly universally given to lasciviou=

"ness, have become modest & virtuous in the highest degree

"Those who a few years ago despised all forms of religion

"except their own horrid & cruel superstitions have universally

"declared their approbation of Christianity — We are gratified

"say they with seeing every where marks of improvement.

"better houses, & Chapels having been built or in prepara=

"tion for being built, at nearly every station — Rapid improve=

"ment in reading & writing — European dresses partly superceding

"Tahitian — The chiefs actively engaged in building vessels after the

"European fashion — Many cultivating tobacco & sugar &

"nearly all manufacturing cocoanut oil."

"Pomare departed this life in this year having acted a

"consistent Christian for a number of years & even previ=

"ous to his conversion having been friendly to the Missionary

"He certainly was the instrument of much good, & must have been

generally & deeply lamented by his subjects.

Read before the
Society of Enquiry on Mission
August 1st 1823 by Mackenie